

Meditation Triangle Group

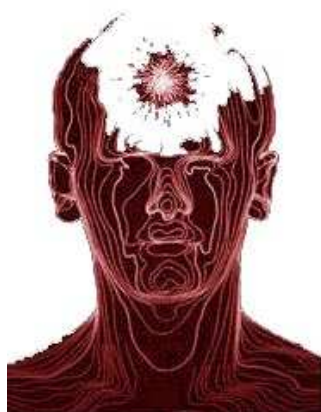
Realising Our Inner World

- The Self – “I”

Through Meditation

(Knowing more about our Inner-Self)

by Philippe L. De Coster, D.D.



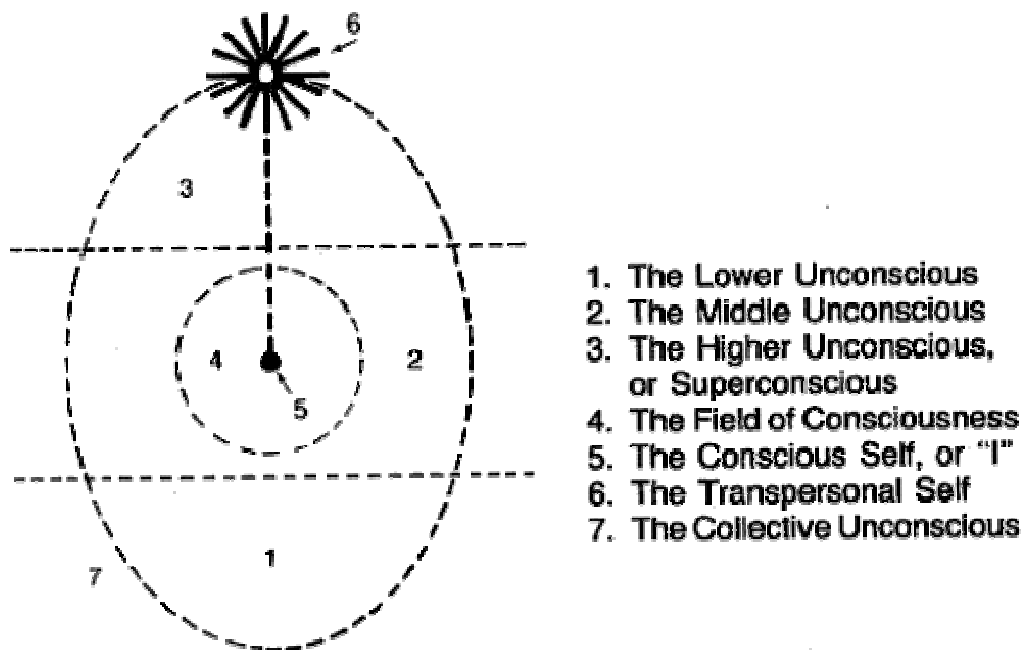
© Satsang Press – August 2010

Gent, Belgium

Our “I” Consciousness

by Philippe L. De Coster

Our Meditation Triangle Group is an inner subjective group, at work per three persons of goodwill, which gives way to the journey we go on, within ourselves, as we explore our beliefs or unbelief, our strengths, and our weaknesses, in an attempt to understand ourselves, and bring about light, love, power, and the kingdom within. We need to overcome past trauma and negative experiences, such as child abuse through clergy and educators, but also religious abuse among old people, especially them that are near to death. This is often overlooked, the fear of death.



Consciousness

Consciousness is our knowing that we know; that phase of knowing by which we take cognizance of our existence and of our relation to what we call environment. Environment is made by ideas held in mind and objectified. The ideas that are held in mind are the basis of all consciousness. The nature of the ideas upon which consciousness is formed gives character to it. Consciousness, the direct awareness: the incessant flow of sensation, images, thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses, which one can observe, analyse, and judge.

The subconscious mind, or subjective consciousness, is the sum of all man's past thinking. It may be called memory. The subconscious sometimes acts separately from the conscious mind, for instance, in dreams and in its work of carrying in bodily functions, such as breathing and digestion. The subconscious mind has no power to do original thinking. It acts upon what is given it through the conscious or the subconscious mind. All our involuntary or automatic activities are of the subconscious mind, they are the result of our having trained ourselves by the conscious mind to form certain habits and do certain things without having to centre our thought upon them consciously.

Personal consciousness is formed from limited, selfish ideas and self-esteem

Sense consciousness is a mental state formed from believing in and acting through the senses. It is, allegorically, the serpent consciousness, deluded with sensation. Since an individual becomes attached to whatever he thinks about, the result of his forming sense consciousness is that he withdraws his consciousness from valuable Universal and Cosmic Energies, and loses conscious connection with his the Universal Mind.

Material consciousness (or, the field of consciousness) is much the same as personal and sense consciousness. It is a state of mind based on belief in the reality of materiality, or in things as they appear. It is the area in which we are directly aware, the sphere in which the personality, with its constant flow of thoughts, perceptions, feelings, desires, sensations and other activities functions consciously. It could also be called the field of experience, because we have learnt through our vehicles, to recognize the phenomena surrounding us – odour, sounds, sights and much more. However, it is the field we move through, the field we more or less deliberately move out to and return from, and is not to be confused with the "I".

The conscious self or the "I", the point within the embodied of pure self-awareness, different from the changing content of our consciousness (the sensations, thoughts, feelings, and more). It is the true centre of awareness, and in varying degrees the observer, the analyst and controller of the field.

The superconsciousness, or superconscious mind, is the Higher Self, a state of consciousness that is based on true ideas, upon an understanding and realisation of the Oneness of Truth.

The Higher Self, or the “Self” with a capital letter, submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents, disappearing (walking away as it were) when we fall asleep, when we faint, when we are under the effect of an anaesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis, and when one awakes the “Self” is appearing again.

The Collective Consciousness. According to Jung, consciousness, seemingly the “sine qua non” of humanity is just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath consciousness lies a much larger substratum of forgotten or repressed personal memories, feelings and behaviours, which Jung termed the personal unconscious. Moreover, beneath that lies the deep sea of collective unconscious, huge and ancient, filled with all the images and behaviours (souls, entities) that have been repeated over and over (reincarnation) throughout the history of not only humanity, but also life itself (all creation). As Jung said: “... the deeper you go, the broader the base becomes.”

The Collective Consciousness consists of images and behavioural patterns not acquired by an individual in his or her lifetime, yet accessible to all individuals in all times, “unconscious” because it cannot be reached through conscious awareness. Here is faith and intent, rituals, and meditation to be brought into practice, to open ourselves up to the universal but hidden treasure. The collective unconscious or consciousness (as I prefer to say) dwells in each of us. Much of our life is structured by the archetypal symbols that are the organised units of the collective unconscious (consciousness).

Here, it is where religion is absolutely wrong. They taught and still teach of paradise or heaven, purgatory identical to hell-fire, and hell. These doctrines have been introduced when humanity knew not better, heaven above, behind the clouds and the blue sky or firmament, and hell beneath the earth. Since, man passed through the sky, went on the Moon, photographed planet Mars and other planets, sends satellites in the air far from eyesight, presenting as such a different view about the cosmos, macrocosmic and microcosmic. Where is your God hiding? Where is that eternal abode for the saved ones somewhere above as well as for the damned beneath, Science says, “nowhere”.

The psychologists Carl Gustav Jung, Roberto Assagioli, and many others claim scientifically, “there is a collective consciousness, which is neither a philosophic construct nor a religious dogma, but an albeit, sometimes rather a

primitive attempt, to present an “accurate” description of the inner world of the psyche, and its relation with the outer material world.

Carl Gustav Jung found this world or universe by carefully exploring the dreams of his patients, then relating them to similar themes he found in the fairy tales, mythology, art, culture of the world.

The collective unconscious contains information that can be accessed by anyone at any time, appearing to have no limits in time and space. The collective unconscious keeps information that was recorded, say, by primitive people, or it can access information about events that have not yet taken place in one’s life. The problem, the collective unconscious does not fit into an individual brain very well. It needs training to catch something from the collective unconscious.

The inhabitants as it were of the collective unconscious, along Carl Gustav Jung’s comments are called “archetypes”, meaning formless patterns that underlay both instinctual behaviours and primordial images. Christians and others would say, “but this is heaven”, and forget all about hell, as one can hardly locate “hell” in heaven. Well, it all does not work that way.

What is really an archetype according to Carl Gustav Jung?

Jung discovered that humans have a "preconscious psychic disposition that enables someone to react in a human manner." These potentials for creation are actualized when they enter consciousness as images. There is a very important distinction between the "unconscious, pre-existent disposition" and the "archetypal image." The archetype may emerge into consciousness in myriads of variations. To put it another way, there are very few basic archetypes or patterns which exist at the unconscious level, but there are an infinite variety of specific images which point back to these few patterns. Since these *potentials for significance* are not under conscious control, we may tend to fear them and deny their existence through repression, or attract them.

To use a verse from the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, chapter 20, verse 12: “And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life...” This is an illustration of the Collective Consciousness and its archetypes, keeping a record of absolutely everything, and nothing whatever is lost. We die, and physically we disappear, but our thoughts and whatever of our actions remain forever. And, it can be called forth through mediumship. The collective consciousness is filled with memories of images and behaviours we have

acquired during our lifetime. Indeed, passing the domain of the personal unconscious we pass into the regions of the collective unconscious, such as tribal and cultural memories. One can pass even into racial memories, and even memories of early species.

Is this really possible? Or, is this again religious nonsense? Sorry, we have no time for religious non-sense. The answer is found in the scientific knowledge of dreams. Dream research has indicated that dreaming is hardly confined to humans. Even an animal dream.

Between the conscious man and the collective consciousness lies the mental way of telepathic interplay as it were, and through psychic development is this mediumship possible. The undeveloped and unthinking human being, the non-mental man or woman can be and often is telepathic, but the centre through which they act is from the solar plexus to the solar plexus (*to the self-same level*), the characteristic of the animal body of man. An example, the telepathic rapport between a mother and her child. High telepathy is from mind to mind, and it is with this form of communication that the highest investigations are possible. Communication with the collective consciousness is a kind of telepathy, the drawing of oneself to an archetype. However, telepathy and the allied psychic powers will only be understood when the nature of cosmic forces and its emanations, radiations and energy currents will be fully understood.

(The Solar Plexus is often confused with the navel chakra, and most writers refer to only a single chakra, located either at the navel or the solar plexus. However, these two centres are quite different

The Solar Plexus Chakra is located midway between the navel and the base of the sternum. It supports the spleen, pancreas, stomach, and liver. Each of these vital organs in addition is associated with its own chakra, just as the heart, lungs, and kidneys are.

The Solar Plexus Centre is one of the main power chakras of the individual. It is associated with the functioning of the aura or psychic energy field, and with Etheric and Astral plane sensitivity . The Solar Plexus Chakra is also the centre of etheric-psychic intuition: a vague or non-specific, sensual sense of knowing; a vague sense of size, shape, and intent of being. The Solar Plexus Chakra - like the Heart Chakra above it and the Navel Chakra below it - is a purely Emotional Centre.)

A professional medium saying to you, “I see your deceased mother-in-law standing before me, in a grey dress, and so on and forth”, is only an archetype she sees, relating some truth of past experiences and events. But, when the medium says, “she feels sorry for what she has done to you”, is only rounding up the story to bring appeasement to the client. The medium may have felt an enmity between the two of you, and that’s all. Or, she or he must be a very good medium imparting accurate information, which they seldom do.

There have been occasions that people gave me a photo about someone, in the hope of getting some thoughts through. Two questions should always arise: Is the person dead or alive? And, “Is it a recent photograph?”

What is important:

1. The medium of transmission
2. The method of transmission
3. The manner of reception
4. The mode of inter-related activity between the medium and the collective consciousness where the archetype should come forth.

The true telepathic person is him or her who is responsive to impressions coming from the collective consciousness, the universe of archetypes, where psychic development is certainly necessary, and that is through hard, creative, subjective work.

To conclude about the archetypes in the collective consciousness, differently explained:

The contents of the collective unconscious are called "archetypes," which means they are original inherited patterns, or forms of thought and experience. They are the ancient, unconscious source of much that we think, do, and say as human beings. They are the "givens" in our psychological makeup, the patterns that shape our perceptions of the world, the furnishings that are present in our psychological home from the moment of birth. We inherit the same forms, but each of us fills in the content by the way we experience our lives. So, the father might be a positive archetype to one person, but it might be filled with negative meaning for another.

Archetypes can be loosely compared to the instincts of animals. For example, birds instinctively know how to build nests and all the birds of a species build the exact same kind of nest. The bird is unaware that it has a special instinct for a particular form of nest building. Nevertheless, it does. Or we could say that dogs, as a species, are psychologically patterned to be loyal and obedient to the archetype of Master. Master is an archetype that is strongly developed in dogs; however, it does not appear to be an archetype that exists in the psyches of giraffes, snails, or buffaloes.

Humans are the same way. Archetypes that exist in humans include Male and Female, God and Satan, Goddess and Witch, Father and Brother, Mother and Sister, Dragon, Lion, Priest, Lover, Hero, Tree, Snake, and so on. We humans automatically inherit the outlines of these archetypes, fill them in with colours and details of our individual experiences, attach meaning to them, and project them into the outer world.

Archetypes are neither good nor bad. They simply are in the collective unconscious. Archetypes are not susceptible to being favoured or tamed by civilization; they live an autonomous existence at the root of our psyches in their original raw and primitive states. To most humans, with their limited awareness of the natural cycles of life and our fear of suffering, certain archetypal qualities seem good and others seem bad. We are attracted to the "positive," creating, nurturing aspects of Mother, for example, but terrified of her "negative" qualities such as her terrible fierce possessiveness, or her power of life and death over us.

Because of our fascination with, and fear of, these unknown qualities within us, when an archetype appears in a dream it can have an especially powerful impact. If a positive or likeable aspect of Lion, Dragon, Mother, Father, Goddess, or God appears in a dream, we may wake up feeling fascinated with the dream - it feels mysterious and meaningful. The meaning behind this kind of dream is often more profound than the meanings behind dreams that have to do with our daily lives. An archetypal dream may have something to do with our life's journey: our striving for individuation, the unification of our masculine and feminine potential, or our initiation into the sinister and dark realm, our underworld and abyss.

But when an archetype appears in a dream in its negative or most primitive guise, it can disrupt our sleep in terrifying nightmares. Then we want to run and hide. We want to forget the dream as soon as we can, for it feels dangerous and

threatening to our well-being. We cannot prevent these contents of the collective unconscious from appearing in our dreams, nor can we domesticate them, but we can diminish their power to interfere with our waking lives by paying attention to what they tell us about ourselves. Accepting the fact that we contain the potential for vile and inhuman behaviour can be a humbling experience that teaches us tolerance, compassion, and empathy; when we know that the archetypal evil lives within ourselves, we are far less apt to point an accusatory finger at someone else

Worthy to know, in his earlier work, Carl Gustav Jung tried to link the archetypes to heredity and regarded them as instinctual. We are born with these patterns which structure our imagination and make it distinctly human. Archetypes are thus very closely linked to our bodies. In his later work after a lot of experiments on his patients, Carl Gustave Jung was convinced that the archetypes are *psychoid*, that is, "they shape matter (nature) as well as mind (psyche)." In other words, archetypes are elemental forces which play a vital role in the creation of the world and of the human mind itself. The Ancients and Occultists call them "*elemental spirits*", the Christians and other Religious Faiths "*bad spirits*". How do archetypes operate? Jung found the archetypal patterns and images in every culture and in every time period of human history. They behaved according to the same laws in all cases. He postulated the *Collective or Universal Unconscious* to account for this fact. We humans do not have separate, personal unconscious minds. We share a single Collective or Universal Unconscious. Mind is rooted in the Unconscious just as a tree is rooted in the ground. Imagine the Collective or Universal Unconscious as a cosmic computer. Our minds are subdirectories of the root directory. If we look in our personal "work areas," we find much material that is unique to our historical experience--could only have happened to us--but it is shaped according to universal patterns. If we humans have the courage to seek the source to which our "account" belongs, we begin to discover ever more impersonal and universal patterns. The directories of the cosmic computer to which we can gain access are filled with the myths of the human species.

Autosuggestion and Affirmation

Autosuggestion will not bear its full fruit unless it is formulated with a minimum of effort... The work of suggestion goes on in the subconscious, and has nothing to do with "conscious" effort which presides over the will. We may say that suggestion is a form of the will, but of subconscious will. So-called miracles at

Lourdes (France), and elsewhere in the Roman Catholic Church or other, are nothing else than someone's deep faith and intent in some archetype as "Mary" that she will intervene in the healing process, which is a kind of autosuggestion and self-affirmation, nothing else. The same with practising faith healers, even if they are honest. Miracles are extremely rare, the more that most people have doubts about saints and miracles. They say, "let us have a try anyway, one does not know"; but, they do not believe in what they are really looking for. The suggestion that we want to impress on the unconscious should be repeated again and again. It seems that there is a spiritual art here to be learnt, the art that makes possible association with and participation in things far greater and more extensive than ourselves, an art in which the little self does not, for once, assert its own powers and knowledge. We may desire and will, but we shall do so vainly if we imagine or fear ourselves to be unable. Our imagination and our thoughts must tend in the same direction as our desire and will.

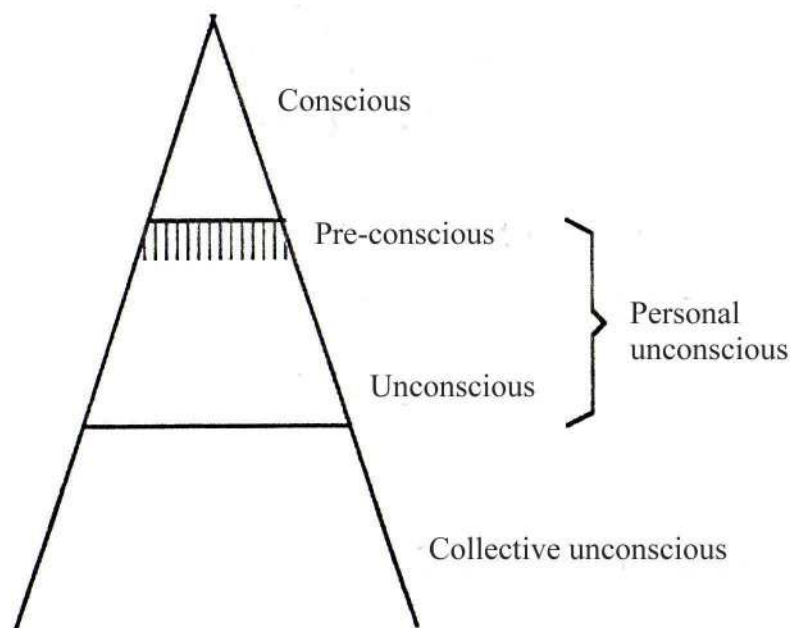
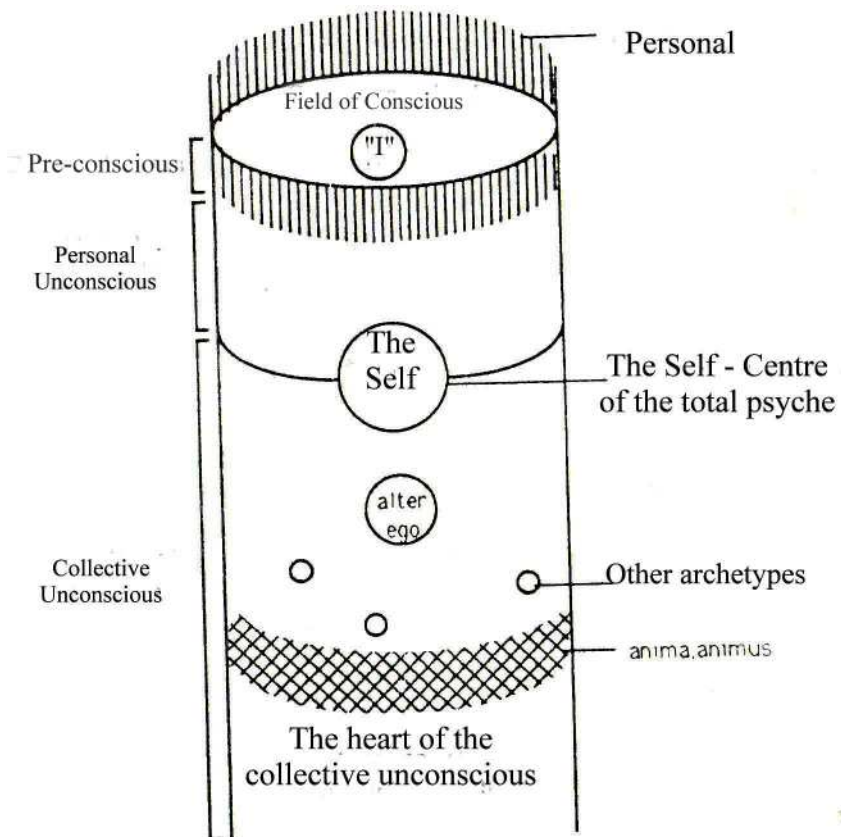
Epilogue from Carl Gustav Jung

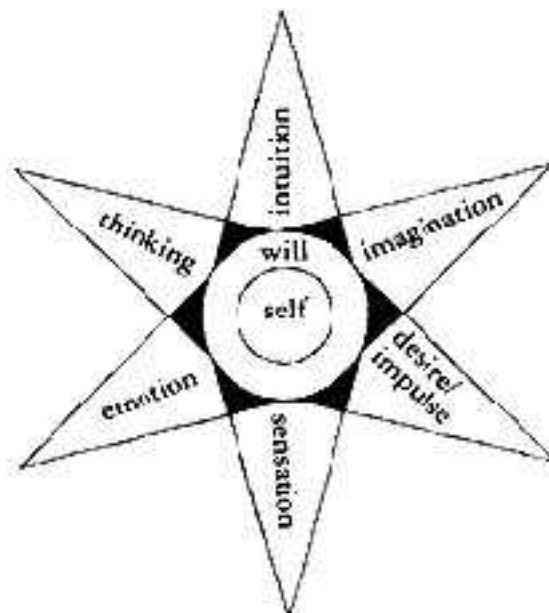
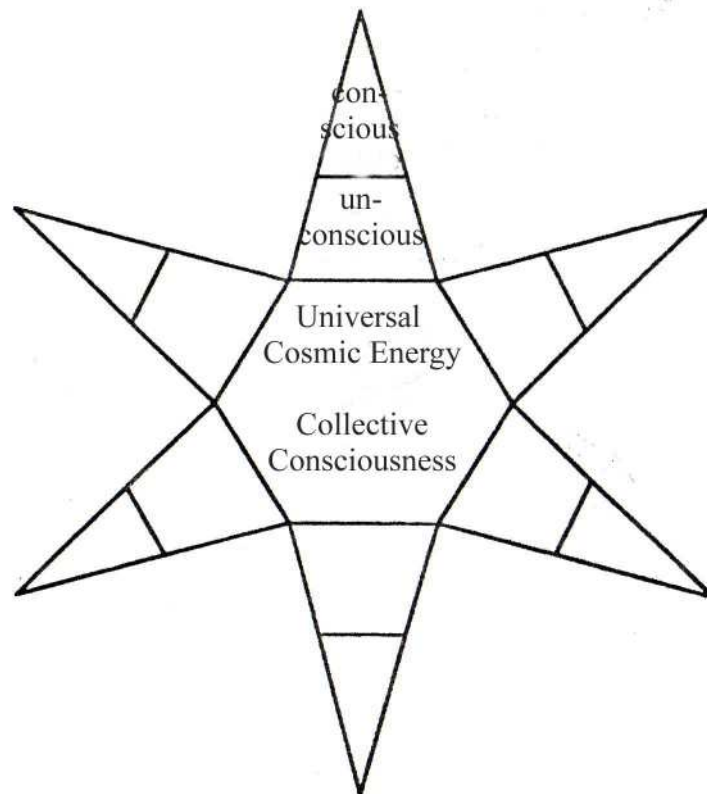
Just as some kind of analytical technique is needed to understand a dream, so a knowledge of mythology is needed in order to grasp the meaning of a content deriving from the deeper levels of the psyche....

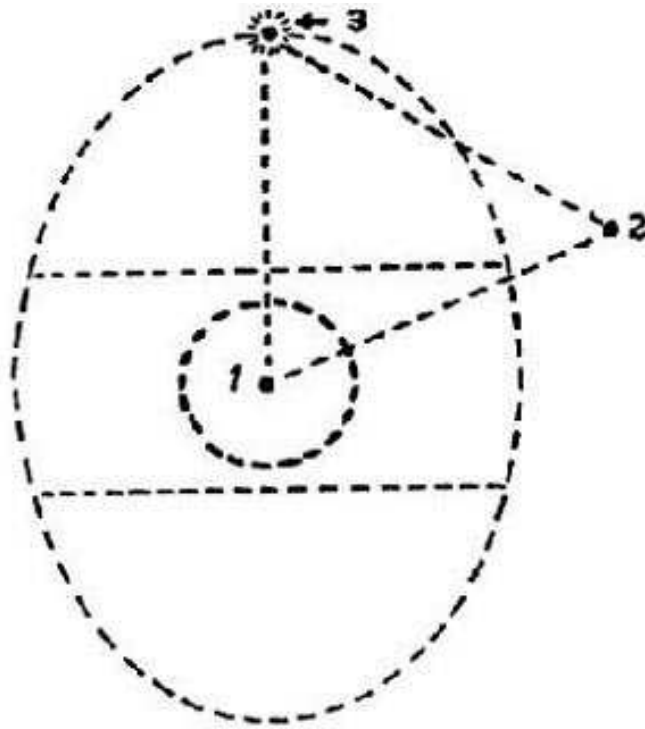
The collective unconscious -- so far as we can say anything about it at all -- appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious.

We can see this most clearly if we look at the heavenly constellations, which original chaotic forms were organized through the projection of images. This explains the influence of the stars as asserted by astrologers. These influences are nothing but unconscious, introspective perceptions of the activity of the collective unconscious. Just as the constellations were projected into the heavens, similar figures were projected into legends and fairy tales or upon historical persons.

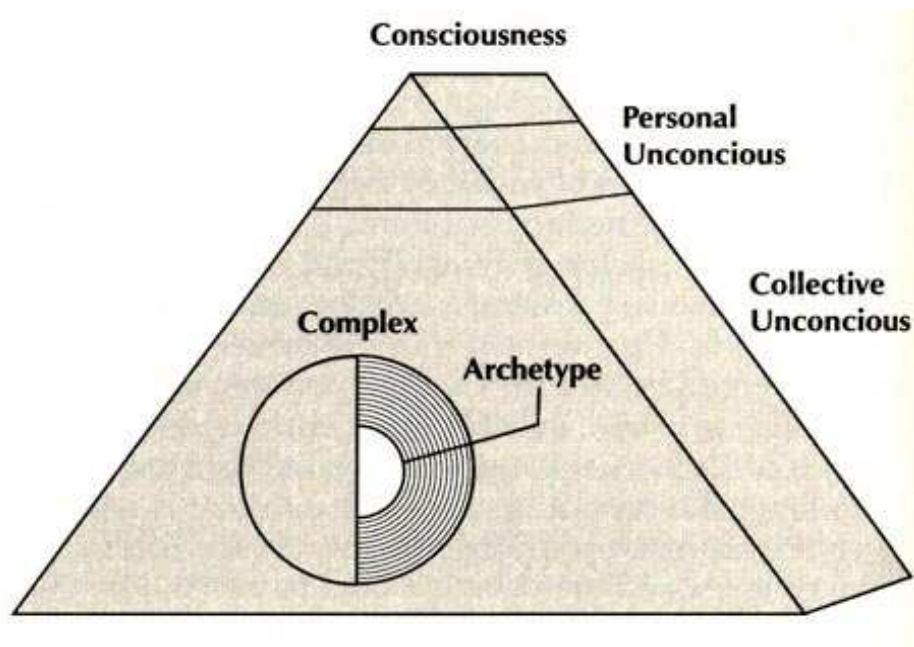
Other interesting and useful diagrams about consciousness







1. Conscious self or “I”
2. External unifying centre
3. Higher Self



The structure of the “embodied man”, the psyche. Consciousness is only a tiny part of the psyche, beneath it lies the personal unconscious and below that lies the vast expanse of the collective unconscious. All sensory experience is first filtered through the building blocks of the collective unconscious – the archetypes – which gather our life experiences around them to form complexes.

A Meditation for Healing

Meditation and ways of prayers are universally practiced as a means of healing, and a great many methods are used. The following is a ritual for personal healing; it should be said with a pause between each line to give time for the desired state to be established, and with a few minutes of reflection between each stanza.

1. Relaxation and calmness

May each and every living cell in my body be relaxed, quiet and at ease.

May each be still and know the peace of the Universal Energy, Infinity.

Each and every living atom in my body has this right.

2. Clearing of the Channel

I empty myself of all action;

I empty myself of all emotion;

I empty myself of active thought;

I am a poll of perfect quietness, open to the Inflow of Healing.

3. Visualization

I visualize a lighted yellow (*golden*) aura, enfolding and filling me gently with its light;

Its bright, yellow vital force, feeding, strengthening and bringing me new life.

3. Reception

I rest back in the Presence of my “Higher Self” (the very Soul of my being);

Its love prevails my self-love, and its healing power pours in, rebuilding, restoring and transforming me.

4. Affirmation

“I am the Power, I am the Glory, I am another god.”

May the healing power of my Higher Self pour through me unimpeded.

May the Energy of Health prevail and bless.

Sources from Carl Gustav Jung and others:

Mysterium Coniunctions, translated by R.F.C Hull, Bollingen Series, Princeton (1989).

The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, Volume Eight, translated by R.F.C Hull, Routledge 1 Kegan Paul, London, UK (1960)

The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Second Edition, translated by R.F.C Hull, (Routledge, London (1996)

Psychology of the Unconscious, A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido, translated by Beatrice M. Hinkle, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford. (2001)

Psychosynthesis, A manual of principles and Techniques, by Roberto Assagioli, M.D., Hobbs, Dorman & Company, Inc., New York and Buenos Aires (1965)

Meditation group for the New Age, Correspondence Courses (1967-1973), Tunbridge Wells (UK), Brussels and Ghent (Belgium), founded by Dr. Robert Assagioli.

Creative Meditation Group, Correspondence Courses (1967-1973), Tunbridge Wells (UK), Brussels and Ghent (Belgium), founded by Dr; Roberto Assagioli.

Ordinary Ecstasy, The dialectics of humanistic psychology (Third Edition), by John Rowan. Brunner Routledge (2001).

© August 2010 – Satsang Press, Ghent, Belgium.



Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D

on the

“Practice of Meditation”

- Introduction
- What is Meditation
- The Process of Meditation
- Preparation
- Relaxation
- Concentration
- Types of Meditation
- Reflective Meditation
- Technical Suggestions on Reflective Meditation
- Receptive Meditation
- Stages of Receptive Meditation
- Silence
- Methods of Reception
- Inner Seeing
- Inner Hearing

- Inner Contact
- Urge to Action
- Registration
- Delayed Reception
- Dangers and Mistakes of Receptive Meditation

Introduction

There are today many approaches to meditation. Some are quite new; some have been known and practiced for thousands of years. The approach described here draws from classical Eastern systems, such as Raja Yoga, and Western psychological systems that include the transpersonal dimension, such as psychosynthesis.

It aims at expanding, elevating, and illuminating consciousness through the harmonious and integrated action of body, feelings, and the mind. It harnesses the considerable power of the mind, directing it toward higher or more profound states of consciousness. It is well-suited for many of us today as a bridging process, a mediatory means by which we can expand our awareness beyond our normal level of concrete mental activity, and reach to the world of meaning, of pure ideas and to the superconscious region, thus building a usable path between these realms. Insights that flow through this path permeate and vivify the whole of our being, and as the process continues, we become more and more in harmony, with ourselves and with all that is around us.

What is Meditation

The urge to discover more about the inner side of life is stimulating many today to a new interest in meditation. In the past this kind of "higher thinking" was considered a passive, reflective form of devotion, but meditation as it is becoming widely practiced today is a positive and creative use of the mind, actively linking the inner and the outer worlds. It entails concentration, reflection, a clear conception and formulation of ideas or thoughts, and then considering and visualizing ways and means of relating them to life, thus taking into account the affective domain and physical activity. The usual contraposition of meditation on the one hand and action on the other is misleading. Meditation is inner action.

The "inner action" of thought is something that we use all the time, even though we may not notice it. Thought lies at the back of everything we do: building our attitudes, our relationships and our whole way of life. In the world of the mind are born the practical beginnings of everything that man creates on earth. From

the architect's thinking before he makes his blueprints, to the scientist seeking a new formula, from the world statesman to the educator, the fabric of everyday life is being woven out of thinking. In this way the future is hourly being created, thinkers are building the pattern of things to come.

Each one of us can consciously use creative thinking, and with it participate in building the inner structure of the world that is to be. For it is not only the thought of the inventors, the scientists and the nations' leaders that is bringing in the new civilization – the weight of the mass of public thought and the power of all men's aspiration are bringing into being the circumstances and the conditions that we shall have tomorrow. Each of us can play a constructive part in this if we so choose.

The mind can become a great creative instrument as well as a vital "activator." Its vision can link us with our higher possibilities, and through it we can probe the outer boundary of our existing knowledge and catch sight of the world of meaning and values. This enables us to gather in the higher ideas of the true, the good, the needed, bringing them down to everyday recognition and making them part of life.

Creative thinking is a definite stage in objectifying ideas and higher concepts; and because thought is an energy we can use its power to develop the qualities, the attitudes, and the conditions that we think should prevail. If we use thought consciously and creatively, we can bring about changes in ourselves and our lives, as well as in our environment and in the world.

But thought often plays through us unconsciously and haphazardly, and frequently it has us instead of our having it, bringing worry and depression and sweeping us along with its own force. If we use it selfishly it can even be destructive. Therefore, at the same time as we realize the power of thought we must see the vital need for right thought, for *right* motive behind thought, and for right understanding of its subtle processes.

The Process of Meditation

Most people have only a vague idea of what meditation really is, and we need to clarify how it is accomplished, how it functions, what it achieves, and the service it can give.

Thought is an energy, an unseen but real power, and through meditation we can focus it to build, to feed, to maintain an idea, a quality or a rule or law of life. As we have said, meditation is inner action – action in the inner worlds. There are many kinds of inner action; all thinking, hoping, imagining, all aspiration and desire, are activities of this type, but they are generally carried on without

conscious intention and without a sense of responsibility. *Meditation, on the other hand is conscious deliberate inner action to fulfil a specific purpose.*

We can get a good idea of the different kinds of action and their definite stages, which we propose to master in meditation – from the analogy of a missile being sent into space, pursuing its course and returning to earth. A corresponding cycle takes place in the meditation process.

The first stage is that of projection. The propelling energy of the missile conquering the downward pull of gravity projects it upwards into orbit around the earth, or beyond. In the same way we can project our centre of consciousness upwards, through the sphere of feeling and imagination, and penetrate to the world of thought and even further – to transpersonal levels. Our propelling energy is that of aspiration, which has aptly been called "fiery aspiration", and we direct it – as in fact we must direct the whole meditation process by the great unrealized potency of the will.

The second stage for the missile is its approach to the gravitational field of another centre of attraction. In meditation this corresponds to coming into contact with some higher centre of energy or life, some realm of thought, or some specific region in the inner worlds.

The next stage is the delicate one of utilizing the pull from the new centre. If this is rightly achieved, the self-propelling energy still existing in the missile will enable it to circle around the new centre, keeping in orbit. The same is true of the individual consciousness in penetrating to higher, inner levels. It has to attain the region towards which it is directed, but must maintain its freedom and not become a prisoner of it. It must remain in that area only as long as is required for its purpose, that is, the experiencing and registering of whatever can be gathered from the centre with which rapport is being made, or from the region of thought attained. Then we should bring the meditation to a close harmoniously and intentionally.

The essential task of receiving information from the instruments in the missile corresponds to our registering and rightly interpreting the ideas that we find in the higher realms; and, finally, all of this has to be utilized and integrated into our existing knowledge and experience, as is the information obtained from the missile.

There is still a further point in this analogy; control of the missiles and knowledge of their position with respect to the earth is maintained throughout their whole course. So it is with meditation, conscious control should never be lost. It is possible to fall into a state of unconsciousness, but projection to this extent is wrong and dangerous. Meditation must always be a *conscious* process,

we must remain fully aware the whole time, and from this point of awareness – here, where we are – direct the whole process, watching it, controlling it, and regulating its extension and duration.

Preparation

Much of the success of meditation depends upon right and careful preparation. To begin with, as quiet a place as possible should be chosen at least until we are used to meditating – where we can feel that our privacy will not be disturbed. We should sit in a comfortable position. While the Eastern way of sitting cross-legged has the advantage of keeping the spine erect, it is a difficult posture for those who are not accustomed to it, and is not necessary. An effective preliminary to meditation is to read or study something connected with the theme we will be meditating on, and if there is time we should do this as it greatly facilitates the tuning in of the mind.

Relaxation

Next, we should try to eliminate all physical, emotional, and mental tension, because such tension is a quite useless expenditure of both nervous and muscular energy. Relaxation is an art that has to be worked at, and it is not as simple as it may appear. In trying to achieve it, we are apt to fall into the opposite extreme – a state of passivity which ends in drowsiness. The aim is to eliminate all superfluous tension, while retaining the muscular tone necessary for alertness and for full attention to what we are doing.

The various techniques of relaxation cannot be described here, but there are many books which go fully into the different aspects of this subject. One of the most effective ways of achieving relaxation is through slow, rhythmic breathing. But breathing exercises should be done with caution, for they can be harmful if carried out too strenuously. An adequate exercise consists of a deep breath with short pauses held at the end of each in-breathing and each out-breathing. This can be done about ten times, rhythmically and slowly. There should be no sense of strain, either in breathing or during the pauses, steady rhythm rather than length of time being the aim. The respiratory muscles should be relaxed with the out-breathing; this "letting go" of tension can then be diffused to all the other muscles of the body and a general relaxation achieved.

Physical relaxation is a first and necessary step to the more important one of psychological relaxation. The latter comprises emotional and mental relaxation, which have to be achieved in two distinct phases corresponding to the two different levels of the inner worlds on which we will be working – the emotional and mental. Each has to be handled separately and in its own way.

If, after relaxing physically, we begin to observe ourselves psychologically, we generally find that various feelings come and go. These emotions have to subside. It is not good to repress them forcibly, but the very fact of calmly observing them from what might be called "above", without being identified with them, causes them gradually to lose their hold and their intensity, so that they cease to sway us and quiet down – if not completely, at least to a degree in which they no longer constitute a serious obstacle; and that is good enough.

This forms the first part of psychological relaxation; the second part is mental relaxation. By nature the mind is restless and in continuous activity, and this is increased by the high tempo of modern life and also by emotional stimulation. If we have managed to exclude for the moment the activities of ordinary life and have quieted the emotions, it will be less difficult to deal with the natural restlessness of the mind itself.

This cannot be done completely in the preparatory stage; it will be the chief task in the first part of the actual meditation, which is concentration. In the preparatory stage it is enough to reach a certain degree of dis-identification from the mind's activity and to resist being carried by it this way and that, distinguishing this activity from the consciousness of the self, whom we could call the "Observer." This provides what might be regarded as a platform from which to go on to the actual meditation. Here, also, the aim is not to suppress by violence, or by an effort which immediately brings tension and therefore defeats its object. The method to be used is more that of attrition, of not feeding with interest any stray thoughts or images which remain in the mind; they will not then interfere seriously with the inner action of meditation. This preparation could be described as making room in and around the center of consciousness for the exercises of concentration that are to follow, yet without attempting to clear the whole area completely at this stage.

Concentration

In taking up the subject of concentration the first point to realize is the difference between spontaneous or automatic concentration and deliberate controlled concentration. They are different, both in nature and in the way they work. What is called spontaneous concentration is the functioning of the mind under the impulse of a strong interest, desire or feeling, which keeps it working along a certain line. A typical example is the businessman as he plans for the success of his organization. Another example is the student's concentration on the subjects on which he expects to be examined.

Those who can concentrate effectively in this way are under the illusion that their power of concentration is good. And it does indicate a certain aspect of it, but the ability to keep the mind on a task or subject when driven by intense

interest, need or fear, does not necessarily mean that it can be done when that incentive is lacking. The fact is that when we try to concentrate on some abstract subject, or on something which entails no personal interest or benefit, we find it much more difficult and frequently discover that we have no real control over our minds after all.

It is evidence that our emotions, drives, and thoughts play, almost dramatically, through us and are the strong forces in our lives. In other words, we are driven by them and are not ourselves the choosing, directing, controlling factor.

This is one reason why the more purely mental or spiritual interests have not the driving potential of the usual personal interests of the average nun. Another reason is an inherent difference in the nature of these interests. Abstract subjects are "thinner"; they are more intangible for the mind to take hold of and focus on. The mind, being less accustomed to this subtler and more difficult way of functioning, is reluctant to face it and turns away. It is a new kind of activity, and generally speaking any new subject or new area of knowledge presents difficulties to begin with. Our minds do not like starting to work in new fields; in those with which they are familiar much work has already been done; there is a background or experience and there are connections which make the work easier. A new subject requires much more concentration and effort.

The realization that we are not the masters of our minds may shock us, but if it does, that is good; it will galvanize us into making efforts towards such mastery, and will help to provide the emotional incentive which was lacking previously. Another important result of these discoveries about ourselves is awareness that there is a difference between ourselves and our minds and emotion. The unsuccessful effort to keep the mind at work has shown that there is a conflict and conflict means that there are two factions which disagree. This awareness of conflict is valuable, therefore, in bringing to light the difference between the "I" with its own will, and the mind, which is often unruly, reluctant or lazy, and has, in a way, a life of its own.

These preliminary but vital recognitions provide a foundation for the task of learning to concentrate the mind *at will*. They bring understanding of ourselves and give the incentive we need to become masters of this precious instrument, the mind, which is so excellent a servant when dominated, but which gives such trouble when it goes its own way.

The initial technique to be used in acquiring mastery over the mind, and ability to concentrate at will is to begin with concentration on simple and neutral subjects which have no interest for us. In this way we learn to hold the mind steady without the help of personal interest and desire. There are many types of such exercises in concentration which can be practiced. Visual perception is a

simple one and consequently a good one to work with first. It is a training of attention, not of thought processes, and it develops an elementary ability to focus the attention, which is the first step in the more advanced and complex processes of meditation on abstract subjects.

A simple exercise in visual perception is to observe a set of objects rapidly and accurately. For instance, observe the contents of a room for half a minute, and then write as detailed an account of them as possible. The same exercise can be done by looking in a shop window or examining a picture.

Exercises in observing outward objects are a preparation for concentration on inner objects – on inner pictures or images. An exercise which provides a transition between the two is to observe a picture for twenty or thirty seconds, then close the eyes and try to keep the image of the picture in the "mind's eye" or "inner eye." We all have this power of imagination in the sense of being able to picture objects, faces and so on, which are familiar. It is more developed and vivid in some people than others, but for the present purpose it is not so much the vividness which is important as the power to keep the picture steady before the mind's eye, and to be able to concentrate the attention on it. Looking at the picture for a time helps considerably in getting a clear image, and therefore in the holding of it.

A second exercise of this type is to evoke an image and keep it steady for a short time without having looked at it just before. One can start with some familiar object, such as a building that is seen every day, a view one knows, or a member of the family. The image should be built precisely, with concentration on the details, and then held steady for a certain time.

Here begins a real fight – an interesting but sometimes exasperating skirmish – between our will to keep the image steady and the fluid nature of the imagination, which is accustomed to pass from one thing to another in rapid and often disordered succession. It will play all sorts of tricks; it will distort the image, enlarge, add some alien element to it, divide it into two or more parts, substitute something else for it, in fact do anything and everything except let the picture remain quietly before the mind's eye.

This fact is again revealing. Once more we have undeniable evidence that we are not the masters of our mechanism and that there is conflict between it and ourselves. It is here that the process of self-mastery really begins in the sense of controlling, directing, and using – at will – our whole mechanism.

Apart from these specific exercises, there is ample opportunity for us to train our concentration during everyday life. It means simply giving full attention to the matter at hand without letting the mind wander. Habitual actions are frequently

carried out in a more or less dreamy way, with stray thoughts about extraneous things playing through the mind. This creates a state of passive dissociation which can grow to harmful proportions, and is in any case a waste of energy. Concentration on the other hand enhances the ability to live in the present in general, and specifically in that focused section or area of the present where our immediate activity lies.

There is a higher and more important form of concentration than those types so far dealt with. It is that of the Observer or inner Spectator who, perfectly concentrated himself, observes the flowing panorama of the psychological life – called by William James the "mind stream" – and in a detached way perceives it, assesses it and, when needed, intervenes to change it. Such an inner attitude is not at all easy to maintain consistently. Being what might be termed "on the bank" of the mind stream, we tend to be drawn into it by its currents. The attention is easily caught by some surge of emotion, by some interesting idea, by some impelling drive, and we have to draw it back continually to the center of concentration, to the self, the awareness, the part in us which is persistent and unchanging throughout all the variations of the psychological flow.

The key to acquiring the power of concentration is, as in every other skill, prolonged patience and repeated practice. Two extremes should be avoided. One is doing these apparently uninteresting exercises in a more or less perfunctory way, as a kind of routine; this would be too superficial to serve much purpose. The other extreme to be avoided is working with them too strenuously and forcibly. Nor should we attempt to do these exercises when tired for then there is little likelihood of success, and any progress made will be at the cost of too great a strain.

Another point is that we should not be discouraged by initial lack of success, especially the inability to maintain concentration for a certain time. At first it is good enough if we can achieve real concentration for ten and then twenty seconds; a minute or two is quite long. So it is better to carry out repeated short exercises with some success than try forcibly to keep the attention fixed for a longer time.

Finally there are two helpful attitudes which, as the Observer, each of us should try to maintain through all the experiments and exercises. The first of these is patience with ourselves or, more accurately, with our mechanism – the attitude that we would adopt towards an unruly child whose cooperation we hoped to gain in the end. The other attitude is confidence that persistence will bring success. The following words of Hermann Keyserling – from his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* – will reinforce our confidence as well as emphasize the value of what we are attempting to achieve:

Undoubtedly the power of concentration is the real propelling power of the whole of our psychic mechanism. Nothing heightens our capacity for performance as much as its increase; every success, no matter in what domain, can be traced back to the intelligent use of this power. No obstacle can resist permanently the exceptional power of utmost concentration. Attention forces every problem sooner or later to reveal all of its aspects which are capable of recognition by a specific nature.

Types of Meditation

In keeping with conventional practice, we can call *meditation* the process of sustained, controlled mental attention and activity. Under this general heading qualifying words will then define the various specific kinds, stages, and techniques. We have already dealt with the first stage of meditation-concentration. The principal types of meditation should now be looked at briefly, before we go on to deal with some of them in detail.

First there is *reflective meditation* which is a strictly mental process. It is sequential, coordinated thinking on or about a definite subject, theme, word, or thought – such as those which are called "seed thoughts"; this is an apt term because the original or starting thought is the "seed" of all the subsequent development of the subject.

Then there is what can be called *receptive meditation* because its purpose is the reception by the mind of "light" on some subject, truth or realization.

It is important to realize that *receptive* does not mean passive or negative; it indicates, instead, a state of intense alertness without any autonomous functioning. It can be compared to listening or trying to see something which is far away, or, using electronics terms, to the mind acting as a receiving station and trying to tune itself to the transmitting station. This transmitting station is primarily the Transpersonal Self; the process is called inspiration, or in some cases intuition, and the result is illumination of the mind. But the effects of such meditation are not limited to that alone, for the new and higher truths perceived have a transforming and elevating power over the whole personality; they change the whole man.

The third type is *creative meditation* which aims first at the building of a dynamic, effective, well-defined thought or idea, then at changing it with the energy of feeling, and finally at animating or propelling by will, so that it fulfils a definite function or purpose; this function may work out either in the inner worlds, or in the world of outer action by supplying a pattern or an incentive.

There is still another aspect of meditation which has been called *elevation* or *ascent*. Initially it leads to receptive meditation. Here the endeavor is to raise the centre of consciousness deliberately to ever higher levels of the inner world. It is like mounting an inner ladder towards the Transpersonal Self, and sometimes contacting it for a brief moment. When the highest point has been reached, an active interplay between the mind and the Self may take place; this has been called by Martin Buber and others the *inner dialogue*.

Reflective Meditation

The simplest definition of the first kind of meditation mentioned *reflective meditation* – is just "thinking". This is a correct definition as far as it goes, but it does not go very far, for generally we do not give much thought to thinking! We imagine that, being intelligent, we can *think* whereas just thinking about anything that interests us is in fact only an elementary state of mental activity.

It has been said that usually the mind "thinks in us", rather than that we think. This means that the activity of the mind is a process that as a rule goes on pretty much by itself promoted by stimuli or drives of different kinds and flowing in a disorderly way, one train of thought driven out by a second, the second by a third, and so on. To describe this state of affairs in a more exact way, we can say that normally the mind is largely independent from the "I" and from the will; it is interfered with all the time by emotions, drives, images, and external stimuli, and reacts to them. Such mental activity scarcely deserves the name of real thinking, for it is only when a strong urge or interest keeps the mind at work that it functions in an orderly and productive way.

Spontaneous – what we might call unconscious or unrealized – meditation is often practiced by people who do not give it that name. The scientist working out a problem, the philosopher thinking out a concept, the business man intelligently planning the organization of his affairs, are all examples of this, for they are all demonstrating coherent organized use of the mind – of the thinking function.

As a preliminary to true meditation, we must realize that the mind is in fact a tool, an inner tool, from which we must dis-identify ourselves in order to facilitate its proper use. The practice of concentration teaches us the first step – how to control the mind, how to keep it steady and one-pointed in the chosen direction. Now comes the next step – that of not keeping it still but making it proceed, walk, so to speak, along the way we want it to go, towards some chosen goal.

Thinking in this sense means reflecting or brooding upon a given, well-defined subject, and working out all the implications, ramifications, and meanings

implicit in it. And meditation can be said to be an unbroken flow of thought toward the object of concentration.

The first requirement, then for developing the art of thinking is to give close attention to the actual process of thinking, for example, to notice immediately when its course begins to deviate as a result of either emotional reaction or preconceived mental attitude, or – as is frequently the case – in response to the process of mechanical association, which carries the mind through a series of allied subjects to a point far from the starting place.

The second requirement is *persistence* – thinking *through*. Here some rather curious things happen. At first, after a few minutes of reflective thinking, it may seem that the subject has been exhausted, that there is nothing left to think about. But if we persist through this blank period and continue to reflect, we begin to discover other unrealized aspects; we may even find what appeared at first to be a dearth of content is, in fact, an overabundance – what the French call an "embarras de richesses," Then a new difficulty appears – how to explore all the now perceived aspects and complexities of the subject, and how to deal with the inrush of new thought-trains.

Innumerable subjects are suitable for reflective meditation, and mention can be made here only of the different categories. Psychological and spiritual qualities offer an almost endless series – courage, harmony, serenity, joy, will, and so on. Symbols constitute another type.

One can also meditate on a phrase embodying a thought. Such "seed thoughts" are, of course, also innumerable, but they can be divided broadly into two classes; first those that appear simple and obvious, but which turn out to conceal a world of meaning; second, those that are formulated in a paradoxical and therefore challenging way. These are often in the form of an apparent contradiction, the reconciliation of which lies in a higher or more comprehensive synthesis of the two opposite terms, for instance –

- "Act with interest and without interest."
- "Suffer with joy." (Which does not mean to enjoy suffering)
- "Make haste slowly." (An old Latin saying, "festina lente.")
- "Live in the eternal and in the moment."
- "See action in inaction and inaction in action."

Technical Suggestions on Reflective Meditation

The first suggestion is never to concentrate on negative aspects but to direct the attention to those that are positive. The second is to write down immediately any worthwhile thoughts or conclusions arrived at, Concepts that seem clear and

vivid at the time have a way of disappearing from the consciousness very quickly and are lost – at least temporarily – if not fixed right away. The formulation of thoughts verbally also forces us to clarity of thinking and precision, and exposes any confusion and vagueness in our minds. The process of writing is itself a stimulus to meditation, and may lead to further valuable thoughts, "flowing from the pen," so to speak. Writing in this sense is a meditation technique; it definitely helps in keeping the mind oriented and active along the desired lines and in maintaining its focus.

The length of time to be spent on meditation varies, but to begin with it should not exceed ten or fifteen minutes; that is quite long enough. The length of period during which one subject should be used as the theme also varies, but it should not be less than a week, and after some practice one often finds a month none too long. In fact some subjects appear to be virtually inexhaustible. A good method is to meditate on certain themes cyclically, that is, a series of subjects may be listed and each one be used in turn for a week, after which the series is gone through again.

At this point the time factor should be mentioned. This is a problem that everyone comes up against. Nearly all feel that they have so much to do, their lives are so complicated, there is so little privacy today and the demands of work and family leave so little spare time or energy, that, although they realize the value of a time of meditation each day, they feel that they cannot undertake it. These difficulties are real. The whole organization and machinery of modern living take no account at all of the rights of the inner life, and so the whole trend at present is against it. But in spite of these formidable problems, if we feel the value of the inner life strongly enough and really intend to give it some time, we can usually find a way of making room in the day for at least a short meditation. Ten or fifteen minutes is not a long period to fit into a twenty-four hour program.

It is plain, however, that it is almost impossible to have ideal conditions for this in modern life, and any quiet time that we find in the day is an oasis to be taken advantage of. A good rhythm to establish is that of meditating in the same place first thing every morning, before entering into the melee of the day. Regularity is most valuable, but we should not be dependent upon such rhythm and, even if it takes longer to attune ourselves to the inner work and is more difficult, it is better to learn to do this quite independently of our surroundings. Each one of us has his own problems on this and each has to solve them as best he can.

The rewards of reflective meditation are many. First it brings increasing proficiency in using the mental tool and a growing sense of mastery of the mind. This, of course, is reached only by degrees, and we cannot expect to achieve perfection; but even a fair degree of control of the mind is gratifying and most

valuable, for the mind is a bad master, but a most useful servant. Other results will emerge if we seriously undertake and continue this form of inner action, which is also a necessary preliminary step to the other types of meditation. It begins our training in this field of work and lays the foundations for all future achievement.

Receptive Meditation

Receptive meditation is a most valuable part of our mental training, but, although it may seem quite simple, it is actually the most difficult kind of meditation and one in which we are quite likely to commit mistakes. There are also real dangers attached to it and we might, therefore, feel inclined to leave it alone. Indeed, it is not advisable for everyone, but there are good reasons for training ourselves in it and adopting it as a regular part of our inner action, and so its right and safe use will be explained.

First of all we should realize how invaluable receptive meditation is and how helpful is the insight it can bring, both in our spiritual realizations and in guiding our personal lives. Second, increased sensitivity, or receptivity to "impressions" is a natural and spontaneous result of inner harmonization, and of relationship or contact with the Transpersonal Self. Third, if rightly practiced it is not only without dangers, but is of great help in avoiding the dangers of *unconscious* receptivity. This point is so important and of such constant application that it will be good to deal with it at some length.

We should start with a clear recognition that we are exposed to countless individual, group, and mass influences all the time. These last take the form of waves of excitement, of panic, or of hostility which sweep through humanity, or large sections of it, and sway or even engulf those who do not know how to deal with them. These waves or impacts, increasingly recognized today under the general term of "vibrations", may reach us through the normal channels of the senses, telepathically through psychic impressions, or from mental levels.

It is most useful – although it may shock us – to realize how much we are tools or victims of influences of which we are unconscious, or to which we yield in a passive way. An outstanding example – which can be regarded as a gigantic experiment in mass suggestion and in influencing behaviour is advertising, the effectiveness of which can be evaluated in billions of dollars. At first it was used more or less empirically, although with unconscious psychological skill; but today it is being used quite deliberately, consciously utilizing definite psychological techniques.

It might seem, therefore, that we should try to become non-receptive to outer influences, but this is not the true solution. It is practically impossible to be non-

receptive and it is also undesirable. We do not live in isolation; we are intimately connected and interacting with both individuals and groups. Isolation would mean self-centeredness, and this is such an unnatural condition that it often proves painful and even unbearable. The anguish of solitude produced by isolation has been described vividly by several existentialist writers, such as Kierkegaard and Kafka.

Human relations imply receptivity, and lack of receptivity excludes love. The true solution requires clear thought and skill in action, and is arrived at through three stages of inner activity – awareness, control of mastery, and wise utilization. These functions of receptive meditation offer the best way to turn the liabilities, the mistakes, and the dangers of receptivity into assets. It is well to realize and remember that receptive meditation is a definite form of *meditation* – it is a *conscious and controlled mental activity*. It is quite different from merely psychic receptivity which opens us to influences of an emotional and imaginative character, and its mental quality enables us to discriminate between the various kinds of impression, to register them correctly and later to interpret them rightly. These points will be developed further when describing the techniques of receptive meditation.

Stages of Receptive Meditation

As the first condition of safe receptive meditation is the ability to keep our consciousness steadily on the mental level of awareness, it should be done only after the preparation described as necessary for reflective meditation. That means we must go through the stages of relaxation, mental preparation by means of appropriate reading, dis-identification of the self from the body and the emotional life, the elevation of the centre of consciousness and the achievement of the inner attitude of the Observer. This is a condition of positive, wide-awake awareness. It is also advisable at this point to make whenever possible a short reflective meditation; this will consolidate the positive inner attitude and develop the ability to use the mind as an obedient tool.

To realize the difference between reflective and receptive meditation it is useful to consider the mind as an "inner eye", which in a certain respect it truly is. In reflective meditation the eye of the mind is directed, figuratively speaking, horizontally, trying to see beyond the apparent, or rightly interpret what has entered the field of consciousness. On the other hand, in receptive meditation we direct the mind's eye "upwards" and try to discern what is "above", on a higher level than that on which we are aware. This can also be described in terms of hearing – we try to catch some inner sound or message coming from a higher or subtler region.

Silence

This stage should be defined carefully, because there are various kinds of silence. The safe and true kind needed is a *positive* silence, that is, the maintaining of an alert inner stillness for the desired period, in which we eliminate as much as possible all the spontaneous activity of the mind.

This phase of silence is a necessary condition for receiving and registering higher influences. Someone endeavouring to reach this inner silence once wrote of it in the following amusing way: "I was in deep meditation and knew I had reached a very clear and lucid place and like a flash came the thought: 'I know that I am in a very, real inner place and yet I am deaf and blind, seeing and hearing nothing.' Another split second and there came a sort of humouring response: 'If you were also dumb you might possibly see and hear.'"

To achieve and maintain the inner silence is a difficult task which calls for persistence and a firm determination; it is a sustained act of the will. Our psychological mechanism is not accustomed to such discipline, it resents it and tries in every way to shake it off. A flood of impressions, sensations, emotions, images, and thoughts invades the field of consciousness and a fierce fight for mastery begins. It seems we will never succeed in expelling the intruders which appear to come from every side at once. But it is not necessary to be drastic; too strenuous an effort is undesirable and defeats its own ends.

There are several techniques we can use; one is to repeat over and over a phrase or word; another is to evoke an image and keep it clear and steady at the centre of the consciousness. The best words and images for this purpose are those which suggest a state of calm, of peace, or silence. An effective phrase for example (from a Hymn used in the Greek Mysteries) is: "Be silent, O strings, that a new melody may come to me." Images such as the following are helpful in stilling the mind: a quiet lake reflecting the blue of the sky; a majestic mountain peak; the starry sky in the stillness of the night.

Those who have already had some training or practice in meditation will be able to use the technique of watching the flow of the mental stream in a detached, dispassionate way, as something objective and not belonging to oneself. If we succeed in maintaining this positive watching attitude long enough the stream of emotions and thoughts becomes slower and slower until it becomes still.

An opposite condition, that of drowsiness sometimes occurs. This is to be firmly avoided because it is not conducive to the receiving of higher impressions and, instead, it may bring about a condition which is undesirable and even dangerous.

The achievement of a true inner silence is well worth the effort and the persistent training which it takes. Besides being necessary for receptive meditation it has a value of its own; it is conducive to a condition of harmony, peace, and quiet joy, and it produces a sense of expansion of consciousness; it is also essentially restful and refreshing.

Methods of Reception

When a state of silence has been reached, that is, after a period of effort and struggle to achieve silence, then we are ready for the further stage of reception. The inner attitude is one of quiet watchfulness and patient waiting; it can also be described as a state of keen but unemotional interest in what may happen and of what we may become aware. The source from which we await impression, and to which therefore we direct our one-pointed attention, should be the Transpersonal Self. That is the sure source of true impression. But it is not the only source; impressions from other sources, if these are high and true, are often channelled or conveyed through the Self to the conscious mind.

Inner Seeing

The methods of reception are various; an impression may reveal itself to our consciousness through *seeing*, *hearing*, *contact*, *urge to action* and in other ways. The most frequent is perhaps through seeing or illumination. The mind is indeed symbolically an inner eye, and the symbolism of vision is often used. We speak of insight, of illumination, of "seeing" in the sense of realizing the meaning or significance of some fact or event, and we talk of "seeing" the solution of a problem and of having a "bright" idea. Sometimes an abstract geometrical figure or some other symbolic form enters into the field of consciousness. However, a series of concrete images and forms and colours may also appear, but these are the product of the imagination and are not mental in character. During receptive meditation this latter type of image should not be paid attention to or at the most can be observed quietly for a short time without undue interest.

A higher form of spiritual "seeing" can be called intuition. This word may be misleading because it has been used in different senses. Etymologically it is connected with vision, it means "seeing into." Intuition in its higher and purer sense can be considered to be a direct, supranational understanding or comprehension of the true nature and reality of something – comprehension of its true quality, purpose, and essence. It is quite different from what are called "hunches," which are psychic impressions about people or events of a personal character and having personal interest.

Inner Hearing

The second way of receiving impressions is that of inner hearing. Here, too, we must discriminate carefully between the psychic hearing of voices and the much higher inner spiritual hearing. This discrimination is not easy and calls for a subtler sense than that needed for discriminating between images and true spiritual insight. The difference can be termed one of *quality and level*. After some practice in receptivity one becomes more and more aware of the level on which the consciousness functions. If it functions on the emotional and imaginative levels the voices heard are apt to give messages or impressions of a personal character, highly coloured with feeling of some kind.

Inspiration coming from high levels, on the other hand, is generally impersonal in character. The messages are short, incisive, and meaningful. They are generally concerned with one's spiritual advancement and will contain wise advice, perhaps pointing out some fault to be eliminated, some spiritual quality to be developed or some high aim to be attained. Sometimes the message is symbolic in character, even though the phrase may appear to have a concrete meanings Such was the case with the well-known message received by St. Francis – "Go, and restore my church." He interpreted it at first as an injunction to build up a half-ruined little church, but later he recognized that it was a command to restore the Roman Church of his time.

To this kind of impression belong also many artistic, literary, and musical inspirations. The poet or musician has the impression that something in himself or somebody else dictates them; he seems to "hear" inwardly, and the poem or idea or theme appears spontaneously in his field of consciousness. The symbol of the Muse inspiring or speaking to the attentive ear of the poet has expressed this through the ages.

Sometimes a *dialogue* is established between the conscious personality and the Self; a question put by the meditating mind receives a prompt and clear inner answer which seems to formulate itself and appear to the consciousness. If the personality comments on it and replies, a further reaction is then registered. This dialogue has been dealt with in its more general sense by Martin Buber in several of his books, and he applies it to all kinds of spiritual relationships This dialogue can be facilitated through the use of one of the symbols of the Self – that of the Old Wise Man.

Inner Contact

The third form of receptivity can be called *contact*, because it is analogous to the physical sense of touch or feeling by contact. But this expression should not be

taken too literally; it corresponds to our meaning. When we say we "contact somebody," or are "in touch with someone." It does not mean that we touch the person physically, but indicates a relationship, a rapport, an easy interplay at will. The same can be said of *inner contact*, alluding specifically to the Self. It means an easy rapport or alignment with the Self which permits receptivity to its influence and awareness of its quality and nature, and gradually enables us to identify or unify ourselves in consciousness with it, however partially and momentarily.

By this inner nearness, by this "touch" of the Self, we are harmonized, vivified, recharged with energy, or with that which we specifically need at the time, and which the Self is trying to convey to us. Its effects are clarifying, and enlightening; we are filled with certainty, courage, joy; we feel renewed and ready to go back to the arena of personal life and meet its emergencies and challenges. We feel that some higher power has descended upon us and added a certain degree of blending or infusion by the Self of the radiation from superconscious levels.

Urge to Action

The fourth way in which we may receive impression from the Self is through an *urge to action*. We become aware of it as a definite urge to do something, to undertake a task or duty in some field of service, or sometimes it may be an urge toward inner action of some sort, to the changing of something in ourselves. This type of impression is what the Quakers who have practiced extensively this art of receptive meditation and silence, call "concern."

Again we need to discriminate carefully between urges coming from the Self or some high, superconscious level, and those coming from the middle or lower unconscious. The way in which they appear in the consciousness is similar, but a difference will be found in the quality and content of the urge. Whenever it takes the form of a call to a great mission or to some action of personal advantage we should regard it with suspicion. An urge of this type is normally of lower origin and is spurious and should be dismissed.

Registration

After reception comes the stage of registration. Every impression whatever its type or the way in which it is received, should be accurately and immediately registered in writing. As mentioned previously in connection with reflective meditation, the higher impressions are often vivid and clear at the moment of reception, but they have a curious tendency to disappear rapidly from the field of consciousness and if not caught and registered at once they are apt to be lost.

Also, the very fact of formulating them and writing them down helps us to understand them better; sometimes during writing the impression will develop, and we will continue to receive it. Writing can, in fact, be used as a technique for evoking inspiration; it creates a convenient channel for the higher impressions. But while writing one should always remain alert and fully aware, not permitting any form of "automatic" writing, which can easily have undesirable and even dangerous effects.

Delayed Reception

Another interesting aspect of receptivity is the *delayed reception of impression*. It often seems that nothing happens during receptive meditation; we remain in a state of blankness and do not become aware of anything new except, perhaps, a sense of quiet, rest, and refreshment. But this does not necessarily mean the meditation has been useless and unsuccessful, for quite frequently some impression or inspiration will come into our consciousness later in the day or even another day. It may be in another meditation or at some time when we are engaged in quite different activities; it may be in some moment of relaxation or on waking in the morning, but whenever it is we will recognize a connection between the apparently unsuccessful meditation and the subsequent inspiration. This connection will be evident when the answer which we sought to some question or problem flashes into our minds, but there can also be a less dramatic but equally true delayed reception of impression to which we should be alert.

Therefore, after meditation we should always keep an inner attitude of watchfulness and attentiveness – what is called, when developed, a "meditative attitude" – during the whole day. We can train ourselves to develop a state of dual consciousness, that is being normally concentrated on our outer activity while at the same time keeping a part of our attention turned toward the inner world. This is the "attitude of the Observer", watching what happens both in the outer world and on the various inner levels of life.

Dangers and Mistakes of Receptive Meditation

There are several possible dangers which are real and therefore should be understood and carefully offset. The two main dangers are negativity or passivity on the one hand and over stimulation or excitation on the other. A state of passivity allows the intrusion into the fields of consciousness of forces or elements coming from the unconscious, including its lower levels. They are not always recognized, but even when they are it may be difficult to offset their influence and resist their onrush. The difficulty is even greater when they delude us by an alluring appearance; they may seem harmless or even of a high order, yet not only are they without real value, but they can be entirely misleading.

The consciousness can also be invaded by influences from sources outside the *individual* unconscious. Using a general expression, we can say that they come from the collective unconscious; this term may include general psychic currents, general symbols and forms (called by Jung "archetypes"), and specific group centers of influence. This field is extensive and as yet relatively little known and we cannot enter here into further discussion of the subject. It is enough for our present purpose to point out the reality of the danger.

The chief safeguard against this danger is a constant positive watchfulness, as has been said already. Another safeguard is the striving to make a clear distinction between spiritual impressions and the multifarious psychic influences of a lower kind. Psychic phenomena have no inherent value toward spiritual or even personal development, and undue interest in them can become a definite sidetrack to our growth. It is wise to remember that primitive people and even animals have psychic faculties. Scientific investigation of such phenomena on the other hand has its definite place, but that is quite a different matter and it requires different methods from those used in receptive meditation.

The other danger which must be guarded against is *over-stimulation*. This is independent of both the nature and the source of the impressions received, for even a high spiritual influence, if it rushes into the personality with full force, can cause undesirable effects in some cases; effects which range from nervous tension and exhaustion to emotional excitement, fanaticism, excessive and feverish activity, or manifestations of uncontrolled psychic phenomena. But undesirable consequences can be prevented by wisely regulating the practice of meditation or by suspending it for a time when there are indications of trouble.

The reality of the dangers certainly calls for caution but should not arouse fear or discourage the practice of meditation. Everything effective can be a source of danger; even the most beneficial medicine can be harmful if taken in excessive doses. And to use another analogy, both inner ascensions and mountain climbing can be dangerous, but with proper preparation, caution, and skill in action the dangers are minimized – and in the case of meditation the benefits far outweigh the risks.

It should be repeated that receptive meditation rightly carried out – that is, with constant, positive watchfulness – and followed by discriminating and wise interpretation of the results, can protect effectively from influences and suggestions coming from either the outer or the inner worlds which may not have been previously recognized or satisfactorily dealt with. Meditation focuses the consciousness on the mental level, from which it can on the one hand exercise an intelligent guidance over the realm of emotion, imagination, and psychic phenomena, and on the other receive light, inspiration, and power from above.

Biography of the Psychologist Roberto Assagioli

Roberto Assagioli (Venice, February 27, 1888 - Capolona d'Arezzo, August 23, 1974) was an Italian psychologist, humanist, and visionary. Assagioli founded the psychological movement known as psychosynthesis, which is still being developed today by therapists, and psychologists, who practice his technique. His work in the field of psychology concentrated on spiritual needs, pertaining to the will and Ego.

Roberto Assagioli was born on February 27th, 1898 in Venice, Italy, and came from a middle-class Jewish background. He was born under the name “**Roberto Marco Grego**”, however, his biological father died when Assagioli was two years old, and his mother remarried Alessandro Emanuele Assagioli soon afterward. As a youth, Assagioli was exposed to many creative outlets at a young age, such as art and music, which were believed to have inspired his work in Psychosynthesis. By the age of 18, he had learned eight different languages, namely Italian (his native tongue), English, French, Russian, Greek, Latin, German, and Sanskrit. It was at this age he also began to travel, mainly to Russia, where he learned about social systems, and politics.

In 1922 he married a young woman by the name of Nella, and they had one son together, Ilario Assagioli.

In 1938, Assagioli was arrested and imprisoned by Mussolini's Fascist government, due to his Jewish heritage, and his humanistic writing. He was placed in solitary confinement for over a month, until he was released and returned to his family. During World War II, his family's farm in Florence, Italy was destroyed, and both he and his family fled underground. Tragically, his son died at the age of 28 from lung disease, which was accredited to severe stress from the harsh living conditions during the war. Once the war had ended, he returned to his work, and began his legacy, known as psychosynthesis.

The years after the war were relatively calm, and it was during this time that he founded various foundations dedicated to psychosynthesis, in Europe and North America. Assagioli lived a long and prosperous life, and had a happy forty-year marriage, until he died at age 86 on August 23rd, 1974.

Assagioli received his first degree in neurology and psychiatry at Istituto di Studii Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento, in Florence, Italy, in 1910. It was during this time he began writing articles that criticized psychoanalysis, in which Assagioli argued a more holistic approach.

Once he finished his studies in Italy, Assagioli went to Switzerland, where he was trained in psychiatry at the psychiatric hospital Burghölzli in Zürich. This led to him opening the first psychoanalytic practice in Italy, known as Istituto di Psicosintesi. However, his work in psychoanalysis left him unsatisfied with the field as a whole, as he felt that it to be too incomplete.

Assagioli is famous for developing and founding the science of psychosynthesis, a spiritual and holistic approach to psychology that had developed from psychoanalysis. Assagioli insisted that psychosynthesis was a legitimate science, which was continuously developing, and which agreed and disagreed with theories formulated by other psychologists, particularly Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

Trained in psychoanalysis but unsatisfied by what he regarded as its incompleteness as a whole, Assagioli felt that love, wisdom, creativity, and will, were all important components that should be included in psychoanalysis. Assagioli's earliest development of psychosynthesis started in 1911, when he began his formal education in psychology. He continued his work on psychosynthesis right up until his death.

He was largely inspired by Freud's idea of the repressed mind and Jung's theories of the collective unconscious. Freud and Assagioli were known to have corresponded, although they never had the chance to meet. Assagioli considered Jung's theories to be closest in the understanding of psychosynthesis.

Assagioli accredited much of his inspiration for psychosynthesis to his month-long incarceration in solitary confinement in 1938. He used his time in prison to exercise his mental will, by meditating daily while in prison. He concluded that he was able to change his punishment into an opportunity to investigate his inner-Self.

His European and World-wide Life's work

Roberto Assagioli's work received gradually world-wide interest, and was greatly helped by two wonderful women, two prominent writers in esotericism, Michal J. Eastcott and Nancy Magor. To assist Robert Assagioli, they moved about between Tunbridge Wells, United Kingdom and Florence, Italy. Roberto Assagioli stayed quite often at Sundial House, in Tunbridge Wells, mostly around the Wesak Festival each year, where the Creative Meditation Group had its yearly convention. Next to "Psychosynthesis", Roberto Assagioli worked out two meditation groups, "Meditation Group for the New Age", and "Group for Creative Meditation", in the form of brochures sent two-monthly to members. MGNA as the course is abbreviated is preparatory to further study, and entirely based on the technique of meditation; while the GCM deals with esotericism as

taught in the books of Alice Bailey. The groups were translated in many other languages as in French by Tilla Grenier (Brussels), and later by myself. The Dutch courses were translated by Jan van der Linden in Den Haag (Holland), who moved to New York (USA), as director of “The School for Esoteric Studies”, for many years.

Respectively, both groups deal next to and as part of meditation with:

Law of Right Human relations	Principle of Goodwill
Law of Group Endeavour	Principle of Unanimity
Law of Spiritual Approach	Principle of Essential Divinity

The two groups are still running where the booklets are provided through subscription:

The Sundial House Group & the International Group for Creative Meditation, Poplars Cottage, Churchland Lane, Sedlescombe, Battle TN33 0PF, East Sussex, UK. Website: www.creativegroupmeditation.org

Meditation Groups, Inc. Post Office Box 566, Ojai, CA 93024-566, USA.

Meditation Group for the New Age (MGNA), a psychological representation of the meditative process, and the group for Creative Meditation (GCM), a more advanced presentation using terminology of the Teacher D.K. who wrote through the pen of Alice Bailey.

The primal keynote of these groups is on behalf of humanity. The intent of the work is not only for personal development but for the further unfoldment of the consciousness of humanity. Your service oriented, regular, meditation, does expand and enrich your personal life and inner growth as meditator.

Following some “souvenirs” from the Full Moon festivals at Sundial House, and other places during the years.

Meditation – Integration with the Soul

Preparation

Sit quietly for a few moments, gradually relaxing all tensions; lengthen the breathing to a slow but easy rhythm; still the thinking as far as possible and direct it upwards to the lighted area of the High Self or Soul (use in your own mind whatever term means most to you).

Invocation

Say, aloud if possible:

“May the five-pointed star of the light of the Soul
surround me and protect me this day,
and fill me with its radiance;”

Visualization

Visualize this light surrounding you and realize that it can be worn like a cloak throughout the day.

Integration

Link each aspect of yourself with the Soul as you say:

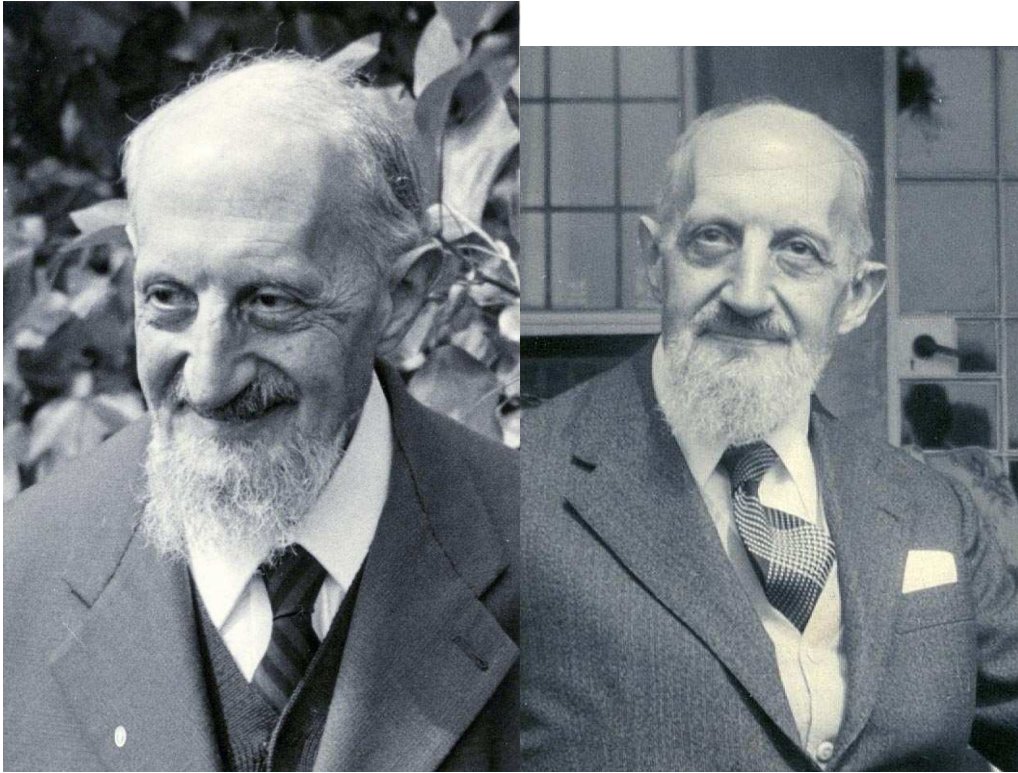
“May the light of the Soul wash through me,
purifying, vitalizing, strengthening;
filling my heart with love and compassion;
inspiring and illuminating;

and may its holy will impel and direct me,
that I may carry out its purpose and radiate
its life to all with whom I come in contact
this day.”

A short silence between each of these phases will give time for reception of the invoked quality. The whole exercise need only take a few minutes, but it is important to carry it out at the beginning of the day. By so doing we align ourselves with the Higher Self before going out to meet the day’s commitments, and call upon it to accompany us.

Taken from “I” – The Story of the Self – Michal J. Eastcott, Rider and Company, London, page 62-63 (1979)

Dr. Robert Assagioli, founder of Psychosynthesis





Sundial House, wonderful premises for study, quite and meditation



Wesak Festival at Tunbridge Wells, Sussex, UK



Our Essential Divinity is unchanging. Essential Divinity lies at the core of our very being – eternal and omnipresent in all life, and the essence of the interrelatedness of every part within the whole. Yet, we experience in our brain-mind consciousness continual change within our expression or out-picturing of our innate divinity. This continual change within the Cosmic Physical World is our blessing and our challenge. This is our opportunity to begin to consciously collaborate with the Will of Divine Energy.



Michael J. Eastcott in Lisboa (Portugal)



Michael J. Eastcott in Scarborough (United Kingdom)



Roberto Assagioli (middle), Michal J. Eastcott (back) Tilla Grenier (left) Nancy Magor must be present too but the writer does not recognise her. She was very sick in the latter years, and did not leave her room much.



Tilla Grenier (left), next to Jan van der Linden



Tilla Grenier, responsible for the French Section of MGNA and GCM, Philippe L. De Coster helped her for a number of years, to take the work over afterwards.



Tilla Grenier in conversation



In Capolona (Italy)

The Great Evocation

From the point of Light within the Mind of God

Let light stream forth into the minds of men.

Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God

Let Love stream forth into the hearts of men.

May Christ return on Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known

Let purpose guide the little wills of men –

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.

And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth

This world prayer, sponsored by no group or sect, is translated into over sixty languages. We urge you to use it daily and to encourage others to do so, thereby effectively establishing goodwill and bringing about right human relations among all mankind.

© Satsang Press – August 2010

Gent, Belgium – Email: fb060913@skynet.be